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LETTER DATED 4 JANUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ETHIOPIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you a press release issued on 1 January 1999 by the Office of the Government Spokesperson, entitled "Will the international community speak out against aggression" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Duri MOHAMMED
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Will the international community speak out against aggression?

It is nearly eight months since Eritrean troops invaded Ethiopia. Since May 1998, 315,936 people in the state of Tigrai and 22,382 people in the state of Afar have been displaced by Eritrean aggression. A total of 338,318 people have been forced from their homes and land.

In the past eight months Ethiopia has shown its commitment to try and find a peaceful resolution to this conflict. It has consistently supported all mediation efforts. It has given formal written acceptance of the proposals for a framework agreement put forward by the High-Level Delegation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). These proposals, endorsed by the United Nations and the European Union, call for the withdrawal of Eritrean forces from Badme to the positions they held before 6 May 1998.

Eritrea has not accepted the framework agreement. Instead it has proposed amendments that were not even discussed by OAU. Despite the OAU call for redeployment of Eritrean troops, the Eritrean Government does not appear to want to create conditions conducive to a peaceful settlement. Indeed, the Eritrean Government has repeatedly shown that it is not committed to resolving the conflict through the principles of international law.

All nation States hold national sovereignty as sacrosanct. Eritrea has violated Ethiopian sovereignty. The Ethiopian people have a long history of defending their sovereignty. Ethiopia wants a peaceful solution to this conflict, but will not compromise its stand that Eritrea must withdraw from occupied territory in accordance with the OAU proposals.

As we begin 1999, does the prospect for a peaceful resolution of the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict look any brighter? Do we have reason to look to the New Year with optimism? We urge the international community to speak out, to insist that Eritrean aggression cannot and must not pay, that what was done by force must first be undone if there is going to be peace.

Ethiopia has worked unceasingly to use all channels available in pursuit of a peaceful resolution. Let us hope that in 1999 we shall see the resolve of the international community to stand up for the fundamental principles of sovereignty - principles which they would not wait for eight months to apply in their own countries.